

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 MC-02 PA-01
PRS-01 USIA-06 ACDA-07 H-01 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 IGA-02
L-03 OMB-01 /068 W

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R 131410Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4102
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, IS, US
SUBJECT: F-15'S ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL

REF: CAIRO 17097

1. IN A BRIEF CEREMONY FRIDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 10, THE ISRAELI AIR FORCE TOOK DELIVERY OF THE FIRST THREE OF ITS PLANNED 25 F-15'S. THE CEREMONY WAS HELD AT THE BASE WHERE THE F-15'S ARRIVED AND THE GUESTS INCLUDED PRIME MINISTER RABIN, CHIEF OF STAFF GUR AND IAF COMMANDER PELED; THE CHARGE' AND DAO ATTENDED FROM THE EMBASSY. IN HIS REMARKS RABIN SAID: "IT IS A GREAT DAY FOR FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND THE THANKS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL TO THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, FOR THE LONG AND THE CONSISTENT ASSISTANCE THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN BY THE U.S. TO ISRAEL AND ESPECIALLY THE SHIPMENT OF ARMS TO ISRAEL TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO DEFEND OURSELVES BY OURSELVES."

2. PRESS REACTION HAS ALSO EMPHASIZED THE TIES WITH THE U.S. FOR EXAMPLE, DAVAR SAID DECEMBER 12: "THE SUPPLY OF
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THE F-15 IS PROOF NOT ONLY OF THE GOOD POLITICAL RELATIONS

WITH THE UNITED STATES, BUT ALSO OF WASHINGTON'S REALIZATION THAT A STRONG ISRAEL IS IN THE AMERICAN NATIONAL INTEREST AND THAT ISRAEL'S DEFENSIVE POWER IS A GUARANTEE OF PEACE IN THE REGION." AL HAMISHMAR WROTE: "THE ARRIVAL OF THE F-15'S IS THE RESULT OF A CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL EFFORT INVESTED BY ISRAEL IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S., WHICH HAS NOT SO FAR SUPPLIED THIS PLANE TO ANY OTHER COUNTRY--NOT EVEN NATO STATES. IT IS, THEREFORE, TO BE WELCOMED, FOR ITS POLITICAL AND MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE." YEDIOT AHRONOT SAID: "EVEN IF WE DO NOT GENERALLY HOLD CELEBRATIONS IN SUCH INSTANCES, WE DID WELL TO DO OTHERWISE THIS TIME--FOR IT CANNOT HURT US IF OUR NEIGHBORS REFLECT ON THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THEM OF THE EVENT."

3. THE ARRIVAL CEREMONY CREATED A MINOR STORM BECAUSE IT OCCURRED ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE CHARGED THE GOVERNMENT WITH DESECRATION OF THE SABBATH. THERE WERE PROTESTS FROM THE NRP MINISTERS THAT THE CEREMONY WAS SCHEDULED SO LATE THAT THE GUESTS AND PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE UNABLE TO REACH HOME BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SABBATH. FOR THIS REASON, MINISTERS AND MK'S WERE NOT INVITED AND ATTENDANCE WAS LIMITED. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRIME MINISTER WAS QUESTIONED ON THE SUBJECT AT THE DECEMBER 12 CABINET MEETING; THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE CABINET COMMUNIQUE COVERING THE DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT: "THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT THE TIME OF THE PLANES' ARRIVAL HAD BEEN LEARNED LATE, AND THAT, IN CONSIDERATION OF THE HOLINESS OF THE SABBATH, HE HAD ASKED THE CHIEF OF STAFF TO POSTPONE THEIR ARRIVAL--BUT IT HAD EMERGED THAT THE PLANES WERE ALREADY EN ROUTE TO ISRAEL AND THAT POSTPONEMENT WAS NOT POSSIBLE. THE PREMIER HAD THEREFORE ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS TO PUT FORWARD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THE TIME OF THE CEREMONY AND TO RESTRICT ITS SCOPE. DESPITE THIS, HOWEVER, IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY DESECRATION WHATSOEVER OF THE SABBATH, THIS WAS TO BE REGRETTED. THE CABINET ACCEPTED THE PRIME MINISTER'S EXPLANATION. IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION, MINISTERS RAPHAEL, BURG AND HAMMER EXPRESSED REGRET AND DISSATISFACTION OVER THE TIME AT WHICH THE CEREMONY WAS HELD, AS THIS HAD OFFENDED THE FEELINGS OF THE MANY WHO HAD BEEN APPREHENSIVE ABOUT A VIOLATION OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SABBATH OBSERVANCE." BECAUSE OF THE INCIDENT, THE AGUDA BLOC (FIVE SEATS) HAS TABLED A RESOLUTION OF NO-CONFIDENCE, WHICH WILL BE DEBATED IN THE KNESSET DECEMBER 13, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO WIN THE VOTE WITHOUT DIFFICULTY.

4. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR OBVIOUS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT THE ARRIVAL OF THE AIRCRAFT WAS SCHEDULED FOR A FRIDAY AND SHOULD HAVE REQUESTED A

RESCHEDULING OR HAVE PLANNED NO CEREMONY. HOWEVER, THE
GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY MISJUDGED THE NEGATIVE REACTION
FROM THE NRP. IT COULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT RABIN WOULD
NOT HAVE BEEN UNHAPPY THAT IT WAS HE AND NOT PERES WHO WAS
THE DOMINANT PERSONALITY AT THE WELCOMING CEREMONY.
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